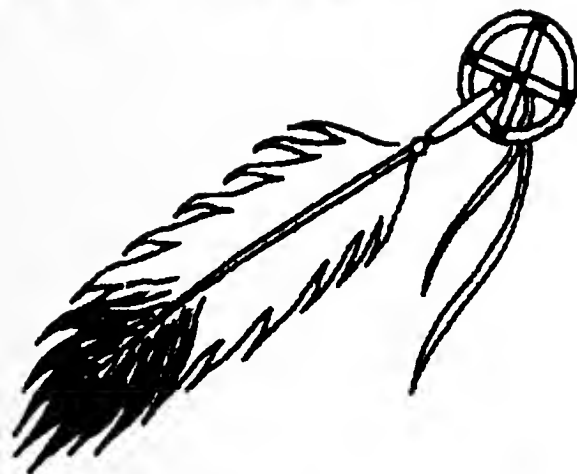


What About Us?

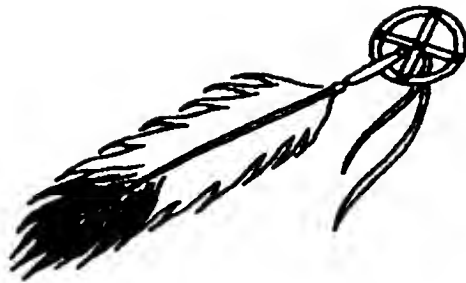


Definitions:

Homosexual/Gay - people who are attracted to those of the same sex

Heterosexual - people who are attracted to those of the opposite sex

Bisexual - people who are attracted to both sexes



Questions:

1. How do people become homosexual?

Many factors go into the development of sexual orientation, including genetics and environment. Many gay people may not realize they are gay until later in life. But most gay people feel they have been gay from the time they were born.

2. How does it feel to be gay?

Gay people don't feel any differently than anyone else; they're just attracted to the same sex. It feels the same as when a man is attracted to a woman or a woman is attracted to a man.

3. Can a gay person become heterosexual?

No. You can't change your true feelings of being gay. Sexuality is actually on a continuum; in other words, some people are more homosexual, and some people are more heterosexual. We all have within us the potential to experience either type of attraction, and some people try different things as they explore what their true feelings are. But whatever your sexual orientation, your true feelings won't change.

4. Can homosexuals get married?

Yes. Most urban areas have churches and ministers who are willing to marry two people of the same sex.

5. Do homosexual males want to become women?

Most gay men do not want to become women, although a few do. Some men may like to experiment with dressing like women, but most still want to be men.



6. If homosexuals seek therapy, would it change their sexual feelings?

It is now known that therapy cannot change sexual orientation. In the past, some gay people went through therapy because society viewed homosexuality as a mental disorder. However, we now know that homosexuality is not a problem that requires psychological treatment; instead, it is a normal expression of sexuality.

7. Is homosexuality a sin?

For deeply religious people, this is one of the most difficult questions to answer. Some religions do teach that homosexuality is a sin, but many religions have come up with alternative answers that do not condemn homosexuality.



8. Do homosexuals have a place in Native American society?

In traditional Native American society, gay people had a place, and homosexuality was not condemned until European influences arrived. In Lakota, gay men are *winkte*. The *winkte* are traditionally involved in naming ceremonies and had powers that were respected.†

Conclusions from “Why Is My Child Gay?”*

- "The exact causes of heterosexuality and homosexuality are unknown;
- Homosexuality and heterosexuality are likely to be the result of an interaction of several factors, including genetic, hormonal, and environmental factors;
- Psychological and social influences *alone* cannot cause homosexuality;
- A biological (genetic, hormonal, neurological, other) predisposition toward a homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual orientation is present at birth in all boys and girls;
- None of the contributing factors *alone* can cause homosexuality;
- Sexual orientation cannot be changed permanently through therapy."



† from The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions by Paula Gunn Allen, Boston: Beacon Press, 1986, p. 197.

* published by the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays, Inc., p. 12-13.

One out of every four families has a gay member. Because society views gay people in a negative way, many gay people are not open about their sexual orientation. This is a great burden because it means that they must keep a major part of their lives a secret from family and friends.

But we can all help change these negative attitudes by recognizing that the gay members of our community are normal, healthy, and productive human beings. We must speak out and tell people that it is okay to be gay. In this way, we will commit ourselves to actively helping our gay brothers and sisters work for basic human rights, liberties, and opportunities.

If you would like more information on this subject, either because you have a friend or relative who is gay or because you are exploring the issue yourself, please contact:

Native American Women's Health

Education Resource Center

P.O. Box 572

Lake Andes, SD 57356

605-487-7072



